



The Wisconsin ARES/RACES Emergency Coordinator



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WISCONSIN SECTION EMERGENCY COORDINATOR, CHIEF RACES RADIO OFFICER AND EDITOR:

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The WEC Newsletter is sent monthly to all American Radio Relay League Emergency Coordinators in the State of Wisconsin. It is intended to provide a forum for ECs to share ideas concerning the organization and training of their respective groups, and as a source of news concerning ARES and RACES activities in the state.

Comments, suggestions and articles (finished or in rough form) are solicited from the readers.

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Y2K Has Come and Gone!

It turned out to be the largest single activation of ham radio operators in history, in not only Wisconsin, but also all across the USA. Had there been major problems, Y2K could have been classified as a major emergency incident, but there were none. Therefore, we can most correctly view it as the largest ham communications exercise in history. We are all glad it is now history!

At the state level, the exercise revealed a few weak spots. We had

some problems with packet links across Wisconsin. In addition, there was the change in State Hamshack frequency, made necessary by QRN and also QRM from stations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Nevertheless, we managed, and typical ham ingenuity and flexibility prevailed. Had there been problems with phone lines and electric power, we could have provided emergency communications for life safety and public welfare.

Over 40 counties successfully checked into the State Hamshack directly, and many others checked into their WEM Regional Office (as originally intended). The point is, the lines of amateur communication were clearly up and ready.

You did a good job! I am well aware of the countless hours of preplanning and antenna raising and rig checking and testing that went on in the state among amateurs. I sincerely thank you and your ARES/RACES groups for that effort, and congratulate you on your performance.

Although we were not called on to actually provide emergency communications, our efforts to be ready to do so did well recognized. Both public and governmental awareness of Amateur Radio was given a huge boost during this undertaking. I predict we will see positive reverberations from this awareness in the future.

So, in short, good stuff! ARES/RACES hams are owed a pat on the back. So are the many non-ARES/RACES amateurs who stood by as backup if needed.

Now, all that does not mean that everything was perfect. The pur-

pose of any such exercise is to reveal areas where work needs to be done to improve our ability to communicate. At the state level, a few of us held a Y2K debriefing meeting on Friday, 7 January in Madison to identify such areas. You will see changes announced in this publication designed to make things better (one such announcement, regarding packet, is on the next page). I urge you ECs to hold a similar debriefing meeting with your groups at the county level, to see what things worked locally and what things need improvement. That's how we all can get even better at what we do best – providing communications when no one else can.

New Additions

There have been so many changes since the last release, it is now time to send you a new Emergency Coordinator roster. Either the new release is in the envelope with this newsletter, or you have or will receive it soon as a separate mailing. The big news:

N9PHS APPOINTED DEC. Wes Jones (N9PHS), EC of Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties, has accepted the position of District Emergency Coordinator for Northwest Wisconsin, effective 1999 Dec 15. Wes is already managing three counties, and doing it very, very well. We appreciate his taking on this additional task and helping us to round out our leadership positions. Of the nine ARRL Districts in our state, only the North Central and Northeast remain vacant after his appointment. But not for long!

KG9NG TAKES ARO AND ASEC POSITIONS. Sam Rowe, EC for Dane County, has accepted the position of Assistant Section Emergency Coordinator and State RACES Alternate Radio Officer, effective 20 December. The EC of Dane County already has special duties in making sure the State Hamshack is covered during emergency incidents, and Sam has been doing an exemplary job with both that task and managing the Dane County group, as well. This appointment makes it all official, and recognizes Sam as Stan's right-hand man in Madison. Congrats, Sam, and welcome to both of these top leadership positions!

KB9TJI APPOINTED EC: Effective 2000 Jan 04, Tim Willoughby, KB9TJI has accepted the position of EC of Bayfield and Ashland Counties. Tim is a trained Skywarn spotter, and a trained tech in 2-way radio service. Welcome, Tim!

N9UNR VACATES EC SPOT, KC1W TAKES OVER. Dave Barrow, N9UNR, has stepped down as EC of Ozaukee County (a tough job, with over 50 active members as your SEC is well aware) and is being replaced by Dave's AEC, Abe Galonski, KC1W. Abe, a retired Coast Guard Communications Officer, is all set to continue the great job that Dave did during this past year. Welcome, Abe!

Your SEC takes pleasure in knowing that there are talented folks out there to help with ARES/RACES in Wisconsin. Look for the addition of more new leaders in our Wisconsin Section. One of the SEC's goals outlined in this newsletter last March was to fill all vacant EC and DEC positions in the state. Target date for this goal: Jan 2001. We are on the way!

YOU can help in the process. Do you know of a leadership-capable ham in a neighboring county that has no EC? Talk to them and to me. We want to build viable

ARES/RACES groups in each county in Wisconsin. The ultimate goal: doing what we do best – providing communications when others cannot!

WC9AAG Reconnected to Packet Network

By Mack Brophy, N9NTB
WEM Hamshack Manager

Our Wisconsin Emergency Management EOC Hamshack's MSYS BBS packet station (WC9AAG) has been reconnected to the packet network. We owe thanks to Larry Shields, WD9ESU, for accomplishing this by adding 145.610 to his BBS nodestack.

The best method of sending a message to the WEM Hamshack is to send it from your home full service BBS. If you use this route, it will enable the WEM Sysop to simply type SR and your message number to send a reply back to your home BBS. Messages for the Hamshack should be addressed:

ST WC9AAG@WC9AAG

You can still connect to the WEM BBS through the nodes and leave a message, but if you expect a reply after connecting that way, you must leave a return address.

Our thanks again to Larry Shields for his patience and his expertise in LINUX and JNOS, which enabled him to configure his system to the benefit of WEM.

KB9IME Appoints AECs, Gets Trailer, Needs TNC

Dan Lenz, EC for Winnebago (South) has appointed several assistants as follows:

John Smith, KB9TJJ, AEC for Operations (S)

Dave Sprangers, N9ZHZ, AEC for Operations (N)

Ernest Swanson, K9LO, AEC for Technical Support and Special Projects

Dan reports that Winnebago ARES has acquired a trailer to use as a command post for events and incidents. They are busy modifying it for such use and should have it ready this spring. He is also looking for the donation of a TNC from hams or ARES groups that have an extra that is not being used. His goal is to have TCP/IP feeds from the NWS and the like and to be on line with WEM during vents and incidents. Please contact Dan if you have one lying around; he will be happy to dust it off and put it to use!

The Computers are Flowing!

As of this writing (11 Jan), 32 computers have been distributed to ECs. Each was completely cleaned, rebuilt and tested by your SEC. Each was confirmed to be manually Y2K compliant (once set to a year 2000 date and time, they keep the date and time just fine thereafter). Each hard drive was re-partitioned, formatted and loaded with software: MS-DOS 6.22, Windows 3.1, MS-Word 6.0a, YAPP (for packet), general utilities, Norton Utilities, WordStar, CALLS (a logging program), and even F-PROT, the best virus scanner in the world. The PS/2s seemed most popular since they are best for packet use, being especially RF proof and RF quiet. However, a significant number of ECs took standard 486s for administrative, logging and other ham tasks.

Yes! I have more! There are 16 more ready to go right now, sitting on my basement floor. Stan's "Computer Rebuilding Service" is

running out of space; I need to move 'em out to make room for the next batch waiting in my garage to be rebuilt. Come on, people, can't you use a free computer (or two or three)? What about parking one in your Emergency Management Office (check with the Director first). These workhorses should give you years of service. Each comes with a keyboard. I also have about half a dozen monitors left, but when those are gone, they are gone. Let me know!

FYI: On the Legal Side

[The following text is extracted from the 97-98 Wisconsin Statutes Database, Chapter 166, "Emergency Management." Note that this source is labeled "Unofficial Text," with the disclaimer that you must see the actual printed statutes to be assured of accuracy. Note also that your SEC is not a lawyer, and a lawyer or court might interpret these statutes somewhat differently than I do. Also, I have extracted only portions of the statute, not the whole document.]

166.03 (d) Employees of municipal and county emergency management units are employees of the municipality or county to which the unit is attached for purposes of worker's compensation benefits. Employees of the area and state emergency management units are employees of the state for purposes of worker's compensation benefits. Volunteer emergency management workers are employees of the emergency management unit with whom duly registered in writing for the purposes of worker's compensation benefits. An emergency management employee or volunteer who engages in emergency management activities upon order of any echelon in the emergency management organization other than that which carries his or her worker's compensation coverage shall be eligible for the same benefits as though employed by the governmental unit employing him or her. Any employment which is part of an emergency manage-

ment program including but not restricted because of enumeration, test runs and other activities which have a training objective as well as emergency management activities during an emergency proclaimed in accordance with this chapter and which grows out of, and is incidental to, such emergency management activity is covered employment...

(e) Emergency management employees as defined in par.(d) shall be indemnified by their sponsor against any tort liability to third persons incurred in the performance of emergency management activities while acting in good faith and in a reasonable manner. Emergency management activities constitute a governmental function.

Footnote to par (14):

A disaster training exercise is covered employment for workman's compensation purposes under s.22.16 (9)(d), 1977 stats. [now s. 166.03(8) (d)], a person remaining the employee of his or her initial emergency government unit for the duration of an emergency government activity.

So, what does this legalese say? Here is what it says to your SEC:

1. Given that RACES members are volunteer emergency management workers, and that we are duly registered in writing (I have you and your people registered in the state RACES database!), we are therefore covered under workman's compensation when engaging in duly authorized emergency management activities.
2. Duly authorized emergency management activities include training exercises such as drills, nets and other activities where we practice emergency communications.
3. Duly authorized means authorized by any echelon in the emergency management organization: city, county or

state. Y2K most certainly would have been defined as duly authorized at the state level.

4. If we do our stuff in good faith and in a reasonable manner, we are protected if someone is injured or property is damaged. Dave Barrow (N9UNR, a lawyer) tells me that "indemnified against tort liability" means that our emergency management employer (city, county or state) will provide legal defense and pay all bills if a court finds that the injured party is due any bucks.

So, folks, if you are on the way to your county EOC because RACES has been activated, or even just to attend an ARES/RACES drill, you are covered by your county under workman's compensation. They may not even be aware of this, but the provisions do exist in Wisconsin Statutes. Chalk up another positive for the integration of ARES and RACES in Wisconsin. Thought you'd like to know!

By the way, the integration is complete. There are no ARES members in the state who are not also RACES members, and vice versa, as of this January 1st. There are a couple of ECs who have not gotten their data in, and at this point, their members are not officially either ARES or RACES members. The tardy counties are Chippewa, Columbia, Forest, Iowa, Kenosha, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette (S), and Monroe. All other counties are registered, and a thank-you to the ECs for the extra administrative work the registration took.

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WISCONSIN GOVERNOR ADDRESSES STATE'S HAMS

[From the ARRL Letter, Vol. 18, No. 50, December 24, 1999]

Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson took to the Amateur Radio airwaves December 16 to express his appreciation to the Badger State's ham community—and especially to those volunteering to remain on alert during the Y2K changeover.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank all the ham radio operators out there who are volunteering their time on December 31 and January 1 to make sure that we do not have any problems," Thompson said. The governor made his remarks from the Wisconsin Emergency Management emergency operations center radio room in Madison during a pre-arranged contact with Wisconsin Section Emergency Coordinator Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR. The contact was carried out on 40 meters. Dane County EC Sam Rowe, KG9NG, served as control operator.

Thompson and his cabinet were visiting the Wisconsin Division of Emergency Government headquarters to review Y2K preparedness.

During the contact, Kaplan told the governor that about 1000 of Wisconsin's 12,000 amateurs are regularly involved in emergency communication. Because of Y2K, many hams not normally active in emergency communication would be standing by on New Year's Eve, Kaplan added. Hams across the state have been recruited by public safety agencies, utilities, hospitals and local government to stand by during the Y2K transition.

Calling amateurs "valuable citizens of the State of Wisconsin," the

governor said it was comforting to know that they were willing to spend their own time "to make sure that other citizens are taken care of."

Thompson also took the opportunity to wish happy holidays to everyone who had tuned in for the occasion. The scheduled contact had received some advance publicity. After the scheduled contact, Thompson stayed around to greet other amateurs who checked in.

"As each ham announced his town or county, it was obvious that the governor understood--and was delighted--that the circuit he had just used had connected him to the whole length and breadth of Wisconsin," said Daniel Gomez-Ibanez, W9NXE, who was among those on hand for the occasion. Gomez-Ibanez said equipment used was a Kenwood TS-440 and a vertical antenna.

--thanks to Bette Kratz, KF9ZU; Daniel Gomez-Ibanez, W9NXE, and Jim Romelfanger, K9ZZ

An Example of Y2K Preparations

[I thought you might like to see a sample of the kind of work and planning that went on in most counties in preparation for Y2K. Rob Indrebo (KB9SDF, Eau Claire EC) sent this email message, which clearly outlines the type of preparation that went on typically around the state. I just cannot express adequately the appreciation for this wonderful volunteer work by those non-hams around the state that are aware of what we did. Thank you all for your efforts.]

Stan,

This is a quick email that will outline our Y2K plans for December 31, 1999.

6:00pm - Our ARES members will be monitoring world and local events as our UTC clock changes to midnight. We will be at the ready to respond to our *emergency mode* if something happens, such as the loss of power or phone service.

8:00pm - Our key ARES members will staff the following essential contact points:

Rob Indrebo (KB9SDF) - Staff position in the Eau Claire County 911 Dispatch Center

Tim McCaughey (KG9MK) - Staff position in the City operations center at City Hall

Scott Mohr (TBA) - Staff position in the County E.O.C.

Jim Staatz (KG9RA) - Staff position at Eau Claire Electric Cooperative

Burch Kelly (KB9RBN) - Staff position at Eau Claire Electric Cooperative

Our local net will begin operation on 146.910 (W9EAU Repeater) with check-ins every 30 minutes unless otherwise required. Our staff at the Eau Claire Electric Cooperative will have both VHF and HF communications and are the contacts to the state EOC or whomever you want us to check in with. If you have frequencies for a West-Central Wisconsin net, please send them to me.

12:00am - City and County status checks

If something goes wrong with power, water or telephone service, our local amateur radio operators will go into their *emergency mode*. We have designated twelve locations in the city of Eau Claire where residents can report emergencies to our amateur radio operators. Contact points are still being discussed throughout the county. The hams will relay the information to the 911 center via one of our local repeaters and an emergency response will be sent. Our local repeaters have emergency back up power and we should be ready in the event of an emergency.

If you need any additional information on our preparations, contact me at KB9SDF@arrl.net or call me at home (715) 839-7006.

Rob Indrebo, KB9SDF